COMIX PLUGOLA

While a number of different artists and writers are getting a crack at their interpretation of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the adaptation of the film was written by Peter Laird and laid out by Kevin Eastman. Look for this book at your local store. Eastman, Laird and Eric Talbot did the inks. Gary Fields lettered. Fan mail and other commentary should go to Mirage Studios, Box 417, Haydenville, MA 01039. A second TMNT movie is in the works.

HARPOON is a new humor mag/tabloid which has just appeared as a freebie around San Francisco. A lot of mags have started this way, depending on local ads for financial support. There was a HARPOON mag out of New York back in the seventies done in the style of the NATIONAL LAMPOON. Like APPLE PIE, it featured work by underground cartoonists. This new humor sheet is published by Scott Zeller and the address is 2405 16th Street., San Francisco, CA 94110. FAX: 415-621-3265. Send a couple of bucks for a sample and bear in mind that this is local stuff so contributions from outside the Bay Area are unlikely to get in. -CG

CLOTHING OPTIONAL is 50¢/stamp from Ken Greene, 753 Tamarack Ave., San Carlos, CA 94070. A nice mini gag book.

A sample copy of John Wade III's C Sheet is 25¢/stamp from him at Box 6308, Fort Wayne, IND 46896.

When people start paying more for the popcorn than for the movie--they turn to crime. -Erma Bombeck, 1990.

CREATIVITY VS PARISITISM

If only creativity and money could be separated. But it can't, if only because each artist--be he (she) painter, writer, poet, composer--anyone, who makes something where nothing was before, provides occupation and profit for so many others. Just as the criminal supports on his angry shoulders a whole army of policemen, sociologists, magistrates, governors, jailers, prison officials, journalists, commentators, reform societies, Ministers of State and so on--all dependent upon his ability to perform a criminal act--so does each act of artistic creation support publishers, critics, libraries, galleries, theaters, concert halls, actors, printers, framers, musicians, ushers, janitors, academics, arts councils, the organizers of international cultural exchanges, art administrators, Ministers of the Arts and so forth--and the weight can seen excessive, the rewards so astonishingly little, and society's expectation that the artist will do it for free (or just enough to keep him alive and still producing) for sheer abstract love of form, beauty, Art, oh Art--while those who are parasitical upon the artist will command high salaries, higher status--oh intolerable, extraordinary!

Fay Weldon
The Hearts and Lives of Men, 1987.

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A Note to Bill Watterson

There is absolutely nothing funny about kidnapping and the recent sequence of CALVIN AND HOBBES in which Calvin kidnaps Susie's doll and holds it for ransom made me angrier each morning I saw it. There are hundreds of families in this country who have suffered the loss of children to kidnappers and murderers. For a long time, Calvin was one of my favorite strips, but lately he has developed into a vicious, mean-spirited little kid who seems to hate his parents and everyone else. Maybe it's time you stepped back and took a look at what you are doing to your character, Bill. C.G.

ROUNDHOUSE COMICS 1 is 50¢/stamp from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Drive, No. Salt Lake, UTAH 84054.

MONDO COMIX

A new comic store specializing in underground comix has opened on Telegraph Avenue near the Alcatraz intersection in Oakland, California. The staff includes Bob Brown who opened Nemesis Comics in Everett, Washington, and Comic Strip in Seattle.

BERNARD KLIBAN

1935-1990

Cat cartoonist Bernard Kliban died Sunday, August 12, 1990. A regular in PLAYBOY for many years, Kliban attended Underground '76 and participated in subsequent comic conventions until his death. A heavy smoker, Kliban lived in Corte Madera. He had heart surgery on July 31 and died at UC Medical Center in San Francisco.

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HOMICIDE
review by DAVIS WALLACH

The Dark Horse entry into the pseudo-realistic genre of police fiction has arrived. Titled *Homicide*, it purports to be based on an actual New York City police case. Instead, it turns out to be a shallow and pretentious piece of hackwork based more on Victorian detective fiction than any true-to-life rendering of a homicide investigation.

The single police investigator is a piece of cinematic fiction. NYC homicide detectives work in pairs preparing detailed reports to their superiors of their endeavors. Few if any dangerous chases are undertaken. The firing of a gun, visiting witnesses alone, riding and visiting crucial areas of investigation without a partner as done in the story are grounds for suspicion.

The use of cinema-noir techniques by John Arcudi and Doug Mahnke remind me of the work of Argentinian artists in such books as *Cabby* and of Chester Gould's DICK TRACY. There isn't anything new or revelatory here. I was hoping for better.

I charge two copies of your zine for a plug in CW. I will run your cover on a space available basis if you send me a small two or three inch stat. I don't run hardcore sex stuff in the newsletter, so if that's your trip, sorry. C.G.

TIAJUANA BIBLE OBSOLETION?

Clay, cheap porn may make the Tiajuana Bible obsolete as a form of erotica but not as an outlet for social criticism and parody. Comix are the way the non-rich make movies. The Tiajuana Bible is a viable art form and an American traditional folk art. TJBS Forever.

On the other hand, the Tiajuana Brass sound a bit dated.

Oh, well, as the saying is paraphrased: Folk Art, let's dance.

--Randy H. Crawford

Randy's latest Dirty L'il Comic is THE GA-GA GAZEBO STORY. 50¢/stamp, 911 Park St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6241.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER GROUPIE?

As a rule, musicians are not fun. The best of them are characters in their own right. They've developed a style and personality that it is possible for you to get off on. Most of them take themselves so seriously. In the sixties the thing I thought was the downfall of most groups is that they thought they were really doing something--really making a statement. And they were out there night after night playing to audiences of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old girls. How can you get any satisfaction out of that if you are a mature responsible male? You can't go on deluding yourself. Some people did by taking vast quantities of drugs. Then they go get these ladies to hang on their arm and they're selling something to a bunch of thirteen-year-olds. This business is about image. The music business has nothing to do with music anymore.

--Gail Zappa in ROCK WIVES, 1986.

The comics community is a ghetto in most respects. Those within buy, read, and collect comics, go to conventions and hero-worship the artists, and in general focus their lives around the form and content of the comic book. Writers within this ghetto are always on the defensive, imagining attack from without when there is a lot more indifference than malice. The average American worker reads his newspaper funnies every day and buys the comic books that are a part of his children's lives, yet he feels insulted if anyone suggests that *he* reads comic books. I say American, because this is not a European or Asian attitude. Comic books have no stigma attached to them in Italy, Japan, or France. Indeed, a French book illustrator may draw graphic albums [glorified comic books] all he pleases and his publisher remains untroubled, but let an American cartoonist approach one of the upper echelon in the publishing establishment in the USA and see how quickly he gets the bum's rush.

What we have done in the past couple of decades is turn this around. Those of us who inhabit the fantasy ghetto have our own parties and our own private conventions and since the late sixties we have had little trouble getting all the comics and comix we want from the hundreds of comic specialty shops that dot the map. Within the comics ghetto, we praise and promote the medium and negate the unenlightened attitudes of those outsiders who deign to put us down for our habit. We have, in effect, kept our child selves alive, while the outsiders have bought the con that adulthood is something worth attaining.

The comics ghetto is invisible and it transcends class and racial barriers. At any comic convention, one will find the rich and the poor of all races thumbing through the boxes in search of missing issues and rare items. A great many comics fans hide their true identities all year and only reveal them at the conventions. Some of these folks are into Games, others into organized groups like the Society for Creative Anachronism, but all are into the fantasy lore that makes up the core of comicdom. There are comics people in high offices and I am not referring to the executives at Marvel or Disney, but to those who work for companies like Apple and IBM and PG&E. Numerous college professors are into comics, though most are forced to hide behind a *popular culture* cover.

The comics ghetto is less insular today than it was back in the days when collectors prowled around in the huckster rooms of science fiction conventions looking for ECs and Marvel Mytery Comics. Comic Conventions helped, but the comic store movement had the most to do with the shift toward a mass audience and away from a cultic one.

People need more fantasy when reality becomes bleeker. We learned this from the Depression of the thirties when movie and comic book companies made fortunes while other businesses dropped left and right. We will see the same trend in the 1990s.

In 1935, a comic book sold for a dime and had 64 pages of comic strips, most of them reprinted from the newspapers. By the early forties, most comic books had original stories and carried a few pages of advertisements. They were still a dime. It was not until the sixties that the price of comics rose. Today's comic book may cost anywhere from 75¢ to $3.95 and it may contain as much as 60% ads. The first wave of comic books peaked in 1946 when television was priced into the mass market and comic books didn't begin to grow again until the early fifties with Gaines' ECs and Kurtzman's MAD. Marvel began to grow again in the early sixties under the leadership of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko and the entire industry got the benefit when underground comix were circulated through the weekly underground newspapers and effectively destroyed the Comics Code of 1954 which had guaranteed a mediocre product. ZAP appeared in February of 1968 and the Freak Brothers strip appeared later that year and if you want to have a little fun sometime have a look at some of the comics Marvel and DC were putting out at that time. Carry a barf bag. By the mid-seventies, the undergrounds had paved the way for the alternative comics, the ground-levels, the black and whites, and before the end of the decade there would be numerous new companies on the scene. Written off as a sixties fad, underground comix continue to this writing and the writers and artists who are still alive are still in the business. Many people now doing comics for the East Coast companies got their start in undergrounds or their little newave cousins.

Are comics better than ever? Of course, they are. Look at the primitive cartooning in any early issue of ACTION COMICS. Today's comic fan can get just about any fantasy he wants in dozens of different styles and formats. The French graphic albums have had a strong influence on contemporary American product and today's collector has the option to buy nice book editions of his favorite material from vintage Barks or American Flagg to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Earlier comic styles were revived by various cartoonists, causing a renewed interest in the originals, hence we are getting the early work of people like Caniff and Capp and Segar and Herriman and Crane. Hopefully, some libraries are buying these books and making them available to people who wish to study the medium and its history. Now, I don't want to say there isn't a lot of truly horrible crapola in contemporary comics; there is. On the other hand, if you look on the high side, you will find a lot of truly incredible art, some of it illustrating stories worth anyone's reading time.

If some or any of this applies to you, support your local comic store. Even if the owner is a schmuck and you don't like him all that well, remember he has made the move and gotten out there and done it for you and your friends. You guys who live in towns where the comic store went under know what I mean when I say it is a mistake to take the place for granted. When I was a kid, all I had was the drugstore and old man Mayo only got five copies of each comic so I was lucky to have gotten to read half the funny books I did.

-Clay Geerdes, 8/90

The cartoons signed M. Wuerker are from ZETA MAGAZINE. I think Wuerker is one of the finest carticaturists and political cartoonists around these days. Look for the mag at your local dealer.

Dear Mr. Geerdes,

Just a note to let you know that I'm really into your COMIX WAVOLA column in Comics F/X. I guess it may seem odd to you, but ug comix were really the first comix I read.. My uncle had all these FREAK BROS and such lying about and my mom and grandma thought it was cool that I was reading comic books. I was about 7 or 8 at the time. . . Could it be because of those books that I turned into a bohemian/beatnik/hippie/punk artist type? Yeah, the hippies were about the only optimistic generation of the counter-culture. . . "Punk" is almost nostalgic these days . . . I thought the big hoopla over the 20th anniversary of the Kent State shootings would end this "20 years ago today" media nostalgia thing as the shootings themselves pretty much signaled the end of the "sixties," but I'm pretty out-of-touch media-wise these days so I can't tell . . . I wonder if the new kids will become retro-greasers or something.

--ANDREW KYLE
Kent, Ohio

I know what you mean about the anniversary scam, but anniversaries are as convenient an excuse as any to reminisce about the good old days. The last time I saw Gilbert Shelton in the flesh was at a small local comic convention. He was surrounded by eight-year-old boys, which probably explains why a comic book about hippies continues to sell in 1990. Out here in California it is hard to tell where Hippie ends and Punk begins. I see a lot of longhairs and baldies mixing. Quite a few bald women on the scene. "Well, it ain't no use to sit and wonder why, Babe; If you don't know by now..." -Clay